



Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
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Enclosure 6a
December 3, 2019

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TO: Members of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education

FROM: Angélica Infante-Green, Commissioner *A. Infante*

RE: **Preliminary Approval of the University High School – Proposal for a New Charter**

In accordance to R.I.G.L. §16-77.3-3, proposals for a new charter require the action of the Council of Elementary and Secondary Education. Further, when considering the overall merits of a proposed charter, R.I.G.L. § 16-77.3-3 requires the Council to place substantial weight on the fiscal impact on the city or town, programmatic impact on the sending school district, and the educational impact on the students in the sending district to ensure that the proposal is economically prudent for the city or town, and academically prudent for the proposed sending school district and for all students in the sending district.

RIDE, in partnership with the external evaluator SchoolWorks, has conducted an in-depth review of the proposed charter, including University High School's proposed academic model, public feedback, and the impact that the proposed charter would have on local communities. RIDE has concluded that the proposal submitted by University High School is both academically and economically prudent, and will result in high-quality academic opportunities for Rhode Island's students.

The quality of the proposed school program and the potential of the program to guide strong student outcomes determines the recommendation for preliminary approval. Final approval is contingent on completion of all required pre-opening items, which include operational aspects of opening a school, as well as addressing outstanding key concerns from the initial charter review. It is important to note that preliminary approval does not guarantee final approval. While not guaranteed, RIDE anticipates presenting the charter for final approval in the spring of 2020 to open in the fall of 2020.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to grant preliminary approval to University High School's proposal for a new charter to open in school year 2020-21; with final approval contingent on the completion of all pre-opening requirements and conditions established by the Rhode Island Department of Education.



University High School

Commissioner's Recommendation & Proposal Overview

Commissioner's Recommendation: Preliminary Approval

Summary of Proposal

Proposed Charter Overview			
Charter Type:	Independent	Year Opening:	2020-21
Location of School:	Providence	Grade Level (At-Scale):	Grades 9-12, but a non-traditional model utilizing cohorts instead of grade-levels
Enrolling Communities:	Providence	Enrollment (At-Scale):	200

School Mission & Model	
School Mission:	"The University High School community entrusts all learners to develop the skills necessary to grow intellectually (academically, social-emotionally, behaviorally, and culturally) and solve complex problems in order to forge positive change in the world."
School Model:	University High School proposes to open a high school serving the needs of Providence students with a strong focus on Multi-lingual learners. The school aims to serve 100% Multi-lingual Learners. The program centers on a year-round school model utilizing a mastery-based curriculum, grounded in restorative practices and language acquisition, with an opportunity to earn credit-bearing certificates as well as an associate's degree through dual enrollment courses. The school will open in 2020-21 with 50 students in its first cohort, adding a 50-student cohort each year, growing to 200 students in four cohorts by 2023-24.

Proposed Enrollment			
Charter Year	School Year	Cohorts	Total Student Enrollment
Year 1	2020-21	1	50
Year 2	2021-22	1 & 2	100
Year 3	2022-23	1, 2 & 3	150
Year 4 (At-Scale)	2023-24	1, 2, 3, 4	200
Year 5	2024-25	2, 3, 4, & 5	200

Overview of Public Comment	
Public Comment Period	July 19, 2019, to November 1, 2019
Public Hearings	Two public hearings were held in the Shepard Building's PAFF Auditorium for University High School: 1) September 12, 2019; 2) October 10, 2019
Summary of Received Public Comments	RIDE received 12 spoken and written comments during the public comment period. Of the 12 received public comments, 11 comments (91%) supported the proposal and 1 comment (9%) opposed the proposal.

Overview of Commissioner's Recommendation

Summary of Recommendation	
Recommended Action:	The Commissioner recommends that the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education move to grant <u>preliminary approval</u> to University High School's proposal. Final approval is contingent on the completion of all pre-opening requirements and conditions established by the Rhode Island Department of Education.
Key Recommendation Drivers:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As verified by SchoolWorks, an independent, nationally recognized reviewer, the University High School (UHS) applicant team has provided a proposal with a unique model that has strong potential to meet the needs of Providence high school age Multi-lingual Learners through self-paced and directed inquiry-based learning cycles. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant group's model intends to support the growing multi-lingual learner population of Providence. The school holds five core values: growth mindset; self-efficacy; transformative process; social capital; and intercultural fluency. The applicant team proposes to deliver a mastery-based education rooted in year-round programming, language acquisitions and the opportunity for dual enrollment. The application proposes a close partnership with Roger Williams University, which will provide postsecondary credit bearing opportunities, business operations support and a facility. UHS will be housed in the University College, Roger Williams building in downtown Providence. The applicants intend to recruit from Providence neighborhoods with higher concentrations of multi-lingual families, with appropriate recruitment materials and Board-level family liaison. The application identifies an applicant team that includes seven members including four student designers who embody the target student population for the school. The applicant group has been planning for two years in partnership with the Barr Foundation and Spring Point as well as consulting with a variety of community members. The application fully met five and scored "mostly" on seven of the fourteen application standards evaluated by SchoolWorks in the quality evaluation. Family Demand: While 2,372 students in grades 9 – 12 that reside in Providence applied for a charter school seat in 2019-20, 335 seats were awarded. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Out of all Providence students in grades 9 – 12 that applied to a charter school in 2019, 14.12% were offered a charter school seat. At-scale, University High School's enrollment of 200 students represents 0.83% of students enrolled in Providence Public Schools in 2019-20. According to March 2019 charter lottery data, 49% of the over 10,000 unique applications for charter school seats were applications from Providence families. The Commissioner recommends that the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education grant preliminary approval to the University High School proposal. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior to final approval, the University High School applicant team must complete required conditions and all pre-opening deliverables. RIDE anticipates the University High School applicant team to complete all required conditions to open in 2020-21. Preliminary approval enables the applicant team to begin implementation of the proposal while allowing RIDE to both support and hold the applicant team accountable for final approval. Below is a summary of the regulatory and operational requirements for applicant teams to gain final approval.

Required Actions for Final Approval

Adherence to charter regulatory requirements is mandated per statute for final approval. In addition to regulatory requirements, the following proposed conditions are intended to address essential concerns identified by the application review committee. The applicant team must meet all regulatory requirements and Council approved conditions prior to final approval.

Summary of Recommendations for Conditions	Summary of RIDE's Concerns with Evaluation	RIDE Required Condition for Approval
Condition A:	The application does not describe the range of intervention strategies that will be used for struggling students. Additionally, the application does not describe procedures for identifying differently-abled students.	By or before January 24, 2020, the applicant team must submit a revised, comprehensive plan to describe the range of intervention supports that will be provided to struggling students and process and procedures for identifying differently-abled students.
Condition B:	The application does not sufficiently discuss the programming for its Multi-Lingual Learners (MLL), examples of its effectiveness, or the supporting research base. Additionally, the application does not sufficiently explain when and where MLL services will be provided, an intervention strategy, or process to determine effectiveness.	By or before January 24, 2020, the applicant team must submit a revised, comprehensive plan describing the programming and supports planned for MLL students including research-based programs it will use, and details regarding the schedule of MLL services and interventions to be provided.
Condition C:	The application states that students will utilize individual learning plans to self-direct and self-pace through courses and rely on rubrics to determine final course passage. However, the application lacks details regarding course sequences and an assurance that despite this non-traditional model, students will have the ability to earn the appropriate course credits needed for state graduation requirements.	By or before January 24, 2020, the applicant team must submit an assurance and any relevant evidence that courses will align with state standards and high school graduation requirements per section 2.3 of the Secondary School Regulations.
Condition D:	The application indicates that Roger Williams University (RWU) staff plan to serve as members of the charter school's Board of Directors and this presents concerns of potential conflicts of interest.	By or before January 24, 2020, the applicant team must submit an updated draft Service Agreement Term Sheet. A fully executed service agreement must be in place by April 1, 2020. Additionally, by or before January 24, 2020, the applicant team must submit: bylaws and procedures that articulate how the school's Board of Directors will identify and address potential conflicts of interest, forms to be used, and timelines used to guide the process.

Charter Regulatory Requirements for Final Charter Approval

The charter school regulations 200-RICR-20-05-2, section 2.2.4(B) specify tasks that must be satisfactorily completed for a proposed charter to obtain final approval.

2.2.4(B)1.	File and obtain approval of articles of incorporation by the Rhode Island Office of the Secretary of State
2.2.4(B)2.	Review and approval of the business plan, financial management procedures, and other relevant financial information by the Rhode Island Office of the Auditor General.
2.2.4(B)3.	Establish governance structure (i.e. board of trustees, board of directors, etc.) to provide proper governance and oversight of school operations.
2.2.4(B)4.	Hire a qualified chief administrator (i.e. Head of School, Executive Director, Chief Executive Officer) to oversee day-to-day operations.
2.2.4(B)5.	Updated staffing plan designed to put in place a faculty that clearly meets student need and is consistent with the school's program design.
2.2.4(B)6.	Provide evidence that 50% of its first-year enrollment is willing to enroll if the school opens the following school year.
2.2.4(B)7.	The school must have identified an appropriate building (permanent or temporary) for operating the school.
2.2.4(B)8.	Develop a final charter.